



Victorian Burns
Prevention Partnership

A Partnership of:



The Royal Children's
Hospital Melbourne

Stay Safe

Burns Prevention Newsletter

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Welcome

Welcome to the first edition of the *Stay Safe* newsletter, an initiative of the Victorian Burns Prevention Partnership (VBPP).

Stay Safe will provide valuable fire safety and burns prevention information to parents, teachers, grandparents and all those responsible for the care of newborns and young children.

The Victorian Burns Prevention Partnership is a collaboration between the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, the Country Fire Authority, the Victorian Adult Burns Service at The Alfred Hospital, and The Royal Children's Hospital.

Stay Safe will be distributed to kindergartens and primary schools. We would love to hear from you with regards to other schools, organisations and networks who may find this information useful.

Winter Fire Safety 2009

Some key fire safety tips this winter include:

- Never leave cooking or candles unattended.
- Always keep clothing at least one metre away from heaters.
- Keep a fire blanket and extinguisher in the kitchen.
- Do not let children stand or sleep near heaters or open fires.
- Ensure all electrical appliances are in good working order and are switched off well before you go to sleep.
- Have a home fire escape plan in place.
- Ensure your smoke alarm is working.

More information on winter fire safety can be found at the official home fire safety website:

www.homefiresafety.com.au.



homefiresafety.com.au

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Image: The Royal Children's Hospital

Hot Glass Burns Like Fire

One year old Ella le Noble was enjoying an afternoon visit at her grandfather's house. But in the blink of an eye, the visit turned sour.

As her relatives turned their attention to another child for just a moment, Ella crawled towards the glass-fronted wood heater in the corner of the room. Attracted to the flames, and just learning to walk, Ella placed her hand on the surface of the heater to pull herself up. She instantly received an agonising mixed partial thickness burn.

'I just screamed, I was so frightened,' said Ella's mother Rachael, on hearing that the accident had occurred.

When Rachael arrived at the house, she acted quickly and placed her daughter's blistered hand under cold running water. Ella was treated at the nearby Geelong Hospital, before being booked into the dedicated burns clinic at The Royal Children's Hospital.

'The burns nurses at The Royal Children's Hospital have been treating Ella weekly since the accident,' said Ella's father Brad.

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Injury Prevention for 0 – 12 Months

In 2008, The Royal Children's Hospital compared mechanism of injury for children aged between 0 – 5 years admitted to the The Royal Children's Hospital over a five year period. The ages were divided into three categories according to milestones of developmental stages: 0 – 12 months, 1 – 3 years and 3 – 5 years. In this issue of *Stay Safe*, we will look at the 0 – 12 month age group.

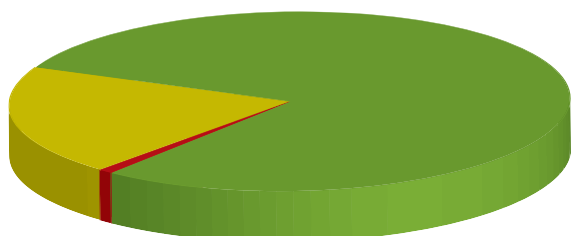
Developmental abilities of children up to 12 months

- Rolls over
- Grasps objects placed in hand
- Sits up with support
- Reaches for objects
- Crawls
- Pulls up to standing position

Prevention of injury 0 – 12 months

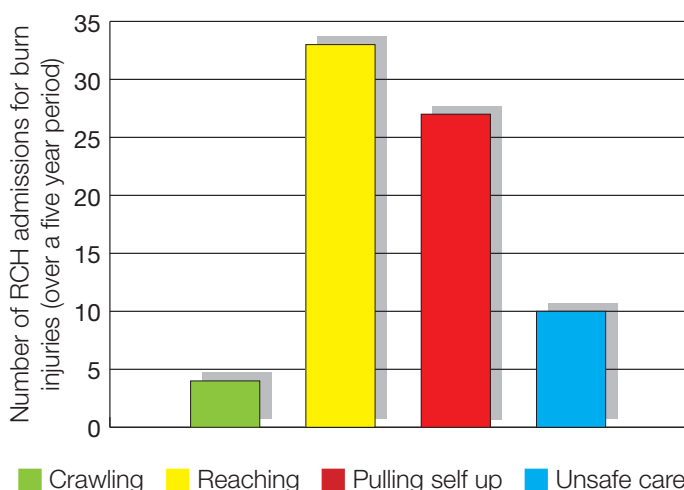
- Hot water delivered to the bathroom should be at a maximum of 50°C to prevent serious scalds.
- Guards for heaters and fires should be attached to the wall.
- Don't drink hot drinks while nursing a baby.
- Choose close-fitting, low fire danger nightwear.
- Have emergency numbers by the phone.

Mechanism of injury 0 – 12 months



■ Flame 1% ■ Scald 79% ■ Contact 20%

Activity at time of injury 0 – 12 months



■ Crawling ■ Reaching ■ Pulling self up ■ Unsafe care

Plan Your Escape

Children regularly have the opportunity to practice fire drills at school but rarely do they do it at home – where most fatal fires occur.

Your family has more chance of surviving a fire at home if you all know how to react quickly. This requires knowledge and familiarity of your home escape plan. We encourage you to plan and practise your home fire escape plan at least twice per year.

Here are some tips to consider when planning your home fire escape:

- Make sure smoke alarms on every level are working.
- Check windows and fly screens can be opened easily.
- Make sure exit doors can be unlocked and opened without resistance. Everyone in the family should practise locking and unlocking the doors.
- Never deadlock yourself in your home.
- Escape routes should be free of clutter.
- Responsible adults should be designated to toddlers or people with special needs.
- Ensure you have at least two ways of escaping a room, e.g. door or window/s.
- Be aware of roof tops and trees that may help with escape from upper floors.
- Identify an outdoor meeting place where the family can gather.
- Escape first then call 000.

Activity

With a house floor plan, discuss with your family two ways out of each room. Walk through each room to point out possible exits. Set off smoke alarms so children are familiar with the sound. Practise at least twice a year.



Image: OFA Public Affairs

Glass-fronted Heaters

Glass-fronted heaters including wood combustion and gas models are a common source of injury for children under the age of two years. Typically, a child will touch the glass window when pulling themselves up to stand from a seated or crawling position. Older children may injure themselves by standing too close and stumbling against the hot surface. When a child touches hot glass, their skin sticks to the surface potentially causing serious damage.

Recommended prevention

- Install a properly fixed guard that is firmly attached to the wall. This will prevent contact with hot surfaces or clothing catching fire.
- Supervise children at all times and provide a safe play area.
- For more information on guards and screens for heaters and open fires, visit www.rch.org.au/safetycentre or call (03) 9345 5085.

In case of injury

- Hold the burnt area under cool running water for 20 minutes.
- Do not use ice or ice packs.
- Cover with cling wrap.
- Seek medical advice.



Images: The Royal Children's Hospital



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'Ella's palm and fingertips bore the brunt of the burns. The nurses feared the skin on some parts of her hand was dead. They said we'll need to keep a close eye on the scar tissue over the next 10 to 15 years, as it's possible her hand will fuse permanently in a curled position, rather than straightening out,' he said.

Unfortunately, contact burns like Ella's are becoming increasingly common. While most families are careful to place safety guards in front of open fire places, this is often not the case with wood heaters, pot-bellied stoves, or gas or electric heaters, where flames are contained by the unit.

The day after the accident, Ella's grandfather installed a safety guard around his glass-fronted wood heater, and secured it to the walls to prevent a reoccurrence.

'I now remind my friends to assess every environment they place their child in – even relatives' and friends' homes – for potential safety hazards,' Rachael said.

Checking Your Smoke Alarm

- Test smoke alarm monthly
- Change batteries yearly at the end of daylight saving
- Dust and clean smoke alarms yearly



General Burns Safety

Parents and caregivers need to know that very young children think and behave in a different way to adults. Burns are among the most devastating injuries the human body can suffer. In addition to the pain, the young victim may have to endure skin grafts, itching, scarring, blistering, deformity and emotional trauma. Physical and emotional suffering can be lifelong. The injury affects the whole family, both emotionally and financially in the short and long term.

Causes of burns in young children:

SCALDING – hot liquids, i.e. tea and coffee spills, hot food, saucepans, hot taps and baths.

FLAME BURNS – burns from naked flame, i.e. open fires, matches, lighters, cigarettes and candles.

CONTACT BURNS – touching hot objects, i.e. heaters, stoves, ovens and barbecues.

Fire safe behaviour relies on the awareness of risk and knowing what to do to reduce the risk. Adequate supervision and positive role modelling for young children is also very important. Parents and carers can help reduce this risk by controlling or removing possible hazards around the home.



Safety tips for the kitchen:

- Keep children out of the kitchen when cooking and educate them on the dangers of hot surfaces.
- Separate children from hot foods and liquids.
- Be aware water can still burn up to 30 minutes after boiling.
- Keep kettle cords out of reach or use cordless kettles.
- Use non-slip tablemats instead of tablecloths.
- Never drink hot drinks with a child on your lap.



Images: CFA Public Affairs

Safety tips for the bathroom:

- Ensure hot water is delivered to the bathroom at a maximum temperature of 50°C to prevent serious scalds.
- Always use cold water first and last when using a tap.
- Never leave children alone in the bathroom. If you have to answer the door or telephone take the child with you.
- Keep the door shut when the bathroom is not being used.
- Swirl water to mix hot and cold water – this helps prevent hot spots in the bath.
- Test the water with a thermometer first. The recommended bathing temperature for young children is 37-38°C.



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Contact us:

VBPP Secretariat
450 Burnley Street, Richmond 3121 VIC
Phone: 03 9420 3729